

## Rep. Baird Secures Key Programs for Water Resources Development and Conservation (April 20, 2007)

Washington, D.C. - Flood control, erosion prevention, harbor maintenance, and permit streamlining were all moved forward today by Congressman Brian Baird (WA-03). The Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) of 2007 includes critical infrastructure projects and programs secured by Congressman Baird that will directly benefit Southwest Washington.

"The programs and projects I secured in this bill increase job opportunities, increase economic development in our communities, promote public safety, and protect our local environment," said Congressman Baird. "Streamlining the permitting process and maintaining our harbors help local projects move forward and boost our local economy; and, implementing flood control measures is crucial for public safety. This legislation addresses these needs as well as water resources and conservation, while investing in the future of Southwest Washington."

The projects Congressman Baird secured in the bill include:

### Extension of Section 214:

An extension of the Section 214 provision that allows public entities, like ports and cities, to expedite the Corps' permitting process. Section 214 of the 2000 WRDA bill was set to expire on December 31, 2008; Congressman Baird worked to get this extended to 2010. Without this extension, the Corps' permitting backlog would increase significantly, causing serious delays for critical projects.

### Port of Ilwaco, Baker Bay:

Navigation improvements built by the Corps during the past several decades have diverted the flow of the Columbia River away from Baker Bay to Ilwaco. This has resulted in increased siltation in Baker Bay and Ilwaco Harbor that requires frequent dredging. Congressman Baird secured a provision to allow the Port of Ilwaco to conduct a study to determine the cause of this problem.

### Puget Island Erosion Control:

Homes and property on Puget Island, located in the middle of the Columbia River, are being threatened by severe erosion problems caused by increased maritime traffic. Historically, dredged material was placed along the shoreline of Puget Island about every 10 years, with the last placement occurring in 1987. Due in part to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) designation of critical habitat for Endangered Species Act listed species, dredged material is no longer placed in this area. However, NMFS now may allow for periodic infrequent disposal.

Following discussions and meetings with island residents, local officials, boat pilots, and the Corps, Congressman Baird was able to include language in WRDA that would provide for placement of dredged material along permitted portions of Puget Island to protect against erosion to existing economic and environmental resources.

#### Hamilton Island Campground (Strawberry Island):

The Corps of Engineers at Bonneville Lock and Dam proposes to build a 100 site, Class A, accessible campground, at the western tip of Hamilton Island, Skamania County. There are no other Corps operated campgrounds in the state of Washington along the Columbia River, from Dallesport to the Pacific Ocean, a distance of 185 miles.

The provision Congressman Baird secured will enable the construction of the Hamilton Island Campground, located within the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), which will house shower facilities, flush toilets, security lighting, entrance station, dump station, and other amenities.

#### Shoalwater Bay:

The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe continues to live on a small federally recognized reservation on the coast of Washington state. Over recent decades the Tribe has lost lands and subsistence habitat due to erosion, including intertidal habitat which is included within the defined reservation boundaries. The Tribe received Congressional assistance by the authorization of a coastal erosion protection project identified in Section 545 of WRDA 2000.

Section 545 provided for a technical study to evaluate, analyze, and ultimately define the cause and most appropriate solution to the erosion problem, followed by a construction project conditioned on the study results. The technical report is now being completed by Seattle District and firmly establishes a feasible project.

Congressman Baird included language to ensure ongoing Congressional support of the project as intended, establishing the need for essential ecological habitat restoration as a project purpose.

#### Essayons and Yaquina Federal Dredge Restrictions:

The current operating restrictions on the federal owned dredges Essayons and Yaquina have imposed additional costs on the Corps' dredging program, yet have not resulted in benefits to taxpayers. Elimination of these operation restrictions on the Corps dredges Essayons and Yaquina will ensure the capability exists to dredge and maintain West Coast ports, reduce daily operating costs to the Corps by 12-22%, and provide the best value for the taxpayer.

Congressman Baird successfully included language to lift all the operating restrictions on these dredges.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

